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A Tale of two Grenadiers and Brothers in Arms.

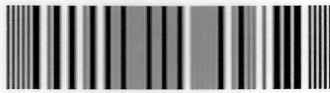
Monte Camino 1943.

University of Nottingham
King's Meadow Campus

Given to the
University of Nottingham by

John Henshaw

2014



This document was written for the interest and information of the family and descendants of the two brothers concerned. It was not written with any intention of publication.

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Foreword.

My father, Charles Henry Henshaw (Harry), born 17 August 1922 and his brother Ronald, (Ron), born 20 March 1924 were the eldest of the nine children born to Percy and Kate Henshaw of Colborn Street, St. Ann's, Nottingham.

They had five sisters and two brothers, who grew up in the hard times before and during the Second World War in the hilly area bordering on St. Ann's Well Road.

Harry had left school at 14 and started work at Simms Sons and Cooke on Haydn Road, Sherwood, with the hope of being trained as a joiner. Much to his disappointment, his employers had noticed that he was good at arithmetic and had placed him in a clerical position as a storekeeper which he felt had dashed his hopes of learning a trade and working with wood. He therefore felt compelled to take another route.

Like so many coming from a deprived background he wished to "better himself" and sought to change direction and become a policeman. But, perhaps like so many young people, he felt that the grass was greener elsewhere and instead of wishing to join the local constabulary he was looking more towards the Rhodesian Police with a second choice of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

He told me once that he joined the Grenadier Guards as a steppingstone in this direction in order to gain the credibility to become a policeman. He believed that some friend of the family or relative had followed this career path many years before.

It's worth mentioning at this point, that Nottingham was a primary recruiting area for the Grenadiers in those days and for some considerable time after WWII. Many of Nottingham's police officers had served in the Guards and this was a contributing factor as to why Nottingham once had such tall policemen.

So, after obtaining favourable references from shopkeepers in St. Ann's and quite contrary to his father's wishes, Harry enlisted in the Grenadier Guards on 23 August 1939, six days after his 17th birthday. He had signed on for a period of 12 years and declared himself to be a year older than he actually was.

One wonders at the youthful naivety of it because ten days later Britain declared war on Germany. For 3 years and 9 months he was retained on various duties in England, at London, Windsor and with a unit demonstrating revised battle tactics to a now growing army.

By this time Ron had also joined the regiment. He enlisted in the Grenadier Guards on 19 Sept. 1942 also as a Regular soldier, for a period of 12 years.

As fate would have it, they were both to see battle with same battalion, the 6th. Grenadier Guards, on a mountain in Italy that left a permanent mark on both of them, Monte Camino.

Their two younger brothers, Dennis and Michael would follow them into the Grenadiers in the 1950's.

University of Nottingham
King's Meadow Campus

John Henshaw 17 February 2014.

This document was written for the family and not for the public. It is not to be used in any way without the permission of the family and descendants of the two brothers concerned. It is a private document and not to be used in any way without the permission of the family and descendants of the two brothers concerned. The name mentioned on page 18, 19 & 20 may be considered to be the intellectual property of other persons.

Foreword

My father, Charles Henry Henshaw Henshaw, born 17 August 1912 and his brother Ronald (Ron), born 20 March 1914 were the subject of the main chapters born to Percy and Kate Henshaw of Colborn Street, St Ann's Nottingham.

They had five sisters and two brothers, who grew up in the same house before and during the Second World War in the busy area surrounding St Ann's West Street.

Henry had left school at 14 and started work at St Ann's Road, St Ann's, Nottingham with the local firm, Henshaw & Co. He was a very bright boy and his employer had noticed this. He was good at his work and was given a promotion as a stockbroker which he did not like. He decided to leave the firm and working with a friend. He decided to start his own business.

Like so many coming from a deprived background he wanted to "better himself" and sought to change direction and become a policeman. He had to pass the entrance exam and was successful. He was given a choice of working in the local constabulary, he was looking more towards the Nottingham Police with a second choice of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He told me once that he joined the Grenadier Guards as a replacement in the division in order to gain the credibility to become a policeman. He believed that some friends of the family or relative had followed the career path many years before.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Nottingham was a primary recruiting area for the Grenadier Guards in those days and for some considerable time after WWII. Henry, of Nottingham's police officer, had served in the Guards and this was a contributing factor as to why Nottingham area had such a high percentage of Guardsmen.

So after obtaining his suitable references from shopkeepers in St. Ann's and quite contrary to his father's wishes, Henry enlisted in the Grenadier Guards on 22 August 1939, six days after his 17th birthday. He had signed on for a period of 12 years and declined initially to be a year older than he actually was.

One winter at the outbreak of the war, Henry was sent to a training camp in Germany. For 3 years and 9 months he was trained in various duties in England, at London, Windsor and with a unit demonstrating various tasks in the field.

By this time Ron had also joined the regiment. He enlisted in the Grenadier Guards on 19 Sept. 1942, also as a Regular Soldier for a period of 12 years.

As this would have it too, they were both sent back to the Grenadier Guards on a permanent basis in 1943.

Over the years, Henry and Ronald were both sent into the Grenadier Guards in the 1950's.

John Henshaw 17 February 2014

Monte Camino, November 2013.

When Adam and I flew to Italy on 2 Nov. 2013 I had little idea of what the experience would turn out to be. All I knew was that I needed to follow my father's footsteps and climb Barearse, a barren rock feature of Monte Camino, to the killing ground at the top where he and his brother had fought in unusually wintry weather with the 6th. Battalion Grenadier Guards 70 years before. Dad, Charles Henry Henshaw, was with No.3 Company. His brother Ron was with either No.2 or No. 3 Company, or, as now seems possible, both, as these two forward companies became depleted and re-formed over the five days that they fought up there.

Dad died in March 2012 and had said very little of the awful experience. Like so many of his generation who had seen the true horrors of war the memory was clearly too painful but it created a special bond which lasted a lifetime between the brothers and an experience which they couldn't readily share with anyone else. Two younger brothers also followed them into the Regiment in the 1950's.

Over the years we have picked up snippets of their experiences in Italy and stored them away in our minds but out of respect we didn't delve or intrude into their private thoughts on the matter. Oh how I wish we could have done, especially with Ron who was rather more forthcoming than Dad.

When Dad passed away it was clear to me that Adam had also quietly realised his granddad's anguish and pain but instead of letting it all go Adam started to search for information. He quickly made contact with Mike Sterling, who had been studying the Battles of Camino and had visited this beautiful area of Italy for the last 23 years in his research. Mike's uncle had been lost there with the 6th. Battalion and never found. Like us he had felt compelled to learn more and in doing so had become expert in the history of what seems to have been the second sacrifice of this, the youngest Battalion of the Regiment.

So it is thanks to Mike and Adam that I was making my own attempt to trace my father's footsteps, armed only with this jigsaw of information gleaned over 60 odd years, maps of the area and reports obtained from the Guards' Archive.

At the airport we met with others who were joining us on this visit. They included George Booker, a lovely old gentleman of 92, who had served with No.1 Company and is one of only 7 men still living who served with the 6th. Battalion at Camino. Accompanying him were his son and daughter in law and their two sons. They had travelled all the way from New Zealand to where George had emigrated after the war. Chris Bennet, another friend of Mike's, whose father also fought at Camino, was to meet us later at Rome and act as our much appreciated driver. Such was the compulsion that we all shared in our own different ways to be there for the 70th. anniversary of the First Battle of Camino on 6 November 2013.

So after picking up our hire cars at Fumicino Airport, Rome we drove south in the dark for two hours to the foothills of the Camino area, where I began to get a feel of the terrain.

Once off the main road from Rome the winding roads taking you higher and higher in a way that makes it difficult to keep your sense of direction.

We arrived at a "Country House" that was to be our home for the next week quite late and tired. The term Country House seems to be widely used by the Italians for a Guest House, constructed in the off-hand Italian way with no frills. It is probably a good source of income for people who still scratch a living out of growing olives and grapes as well as rearing a few goats and pigs.



This was my first daylight view of Italy, taken from my balcony at 8:00 a.m. Less than 5 minutes later the castle had been swallowed up in the ever shifting cloud again. That such a peaceful and beautiful country had once been ravaged by war seemed unimaginable.

The building is the castle at Rocca d'Evandro, a medieval fortification on a natural crag, typical of the area and from where the local community takes its name. The small town below had been liberated by the 6th. Battalion Grenadier Guards in the Second Battle of Camino in December 1943.

We had arrived on the weekend when the local people hold their armistice remembrance service. This is a week before our own back in the UK. It came as something of a surprise to me that they held such an event but they do show genuine recognition of their liberation and involve their youngsters too.

On the first day, Sunday 3 November, after attending one of these local services we set off to place a wreath at the Cairn of Remembrance for the Grenadiers at the back of Monte Camino. That is to say the northern side, which is easier to access than the southern route, via a small hamlet high in the foothills called Formella.

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George walks with a stick these days but he intended getting up there to the Cairn to pay his respects to his old mates. The climb is steep, uneven and rocky but with the help of his two

grandsons he made it and was photographed and interviewed by the local media after a short service.



George determinedly making his way through the mist and rocks to the Cairn.

What a fantastic man for his age, with a mind still as sharp as a razor and such a gentleman.



The Cairn, with British and Italian tributes.

The following day, Monday, we were to attend the **Service of Remembrance** at the War Memorial in Rocca d'Evandro.

I wasn't aware that this was part of the visit but it was to become part of a wonderful realisation of a bond of appreciation and respect from the local people for the sacrifice of the 6th. Battalion Grenadier Guards in two separate battles to liberate this rural part of Italy.



The Local Children Arriving at the War Memorial.

On the day bus loads of local children were brought up to the town square waving Italian flags mingled with a few Union Jacks whilst a local band played. The Carabinieri and military representatives also attended and placed their wreaths etc. The Mayor gave a lengthy speech about the war in general and the part played in their liberation by the allies and particularly the 6th. Battalion Grenadier Guards. This was translated for our benefit by another fantastic local, Giovanni, who to our amusement had picked up his English in Lancashire...and the broad northern accent was immediately noticeable.

George Booker was received as an honoured guest at the service. He was introduced to the people attending as one of the last of the 6th. Battalion who had fought there.

At the end of it all the kids queued up the steps to embrace this lovely old man in that typically Italian way as if he was the Pope. I managed to take one shot and then I had to walk away and have a moment. I was beginning to realise what genuinely affectionate and grateful people I was amongst and my visit was taking another dimension.



Tribute to the 6th.Battalion Grenadiers at Rocca d'Evandro War Memorial.



The Mayor, Dr. Angelo Marrocco and Giovanni at the service.



George and the local children.

Look at the kids' faces and body language. They've walked up the steps to greet him because they are genuinely interested, not because they've been told to be there. Note the Union Jacks mingled with the Italian flags in the bunting.

Later, in the afternoon, the Mayor, Dr. Angelo Marrocco, put on a meal for us at our Country House. Over several courses this gave time for discussion with other local people who shared an interest in the wartime history of the area.



Mike presented a finely detailed statuette of a Grenadier to the Mayor.

So now we must come to the things we had gone to see. George particularly wanted to visit the War Cemetery at Minturno. A lovely setting and immaculately kept by anyone's standard. He wanted to leave a cross and pay his last respects to a man he'd swapped duties with. This soldier was Guardsman L.E.Liddiard and as a result of this swap he took a fatal hit that George would have taken. George has now lived for another 70 years, raised a family and prospered but it clearly weighs on his thoughts all these years on.

From there we went to Cassino to visit the British Cemetery there. Just browsing around, looking for headstones with a Grenadiers badge at the top I was confronted with the headstone of Lieutenant Brian Henshaw Age 20; killed 7 Nov. 1943.

He was no relative but Dad had told me of him being placed with his Company as a fairly new platoon commander, a "Chicko". He was shot quite close to Dad as they approached the top of Barearse at daybreak and was the first Grenadier to be lost in the battle.

From there we could see Monte Cassino, the mountain that is spoken about above all others in the Italian Campaign. It's actually much smaller than Monte Camino from which it can be seen 15 miles or so the north. The Monastery at the top was blasted to dust and rubble in 1944 and rebuilt again in 1949 to a remarkable standard. It is a most impressive place to visit and the slow climb is made via one of those zig-zag roads to the top.



Monte Cassino War Cemetery with the Monastery on the hill beyond.



The Headstone of Lt. Brian Henshaw at Monte Cassino War Cemetery.

On Wednesday 6 November, 5 of us decided to climb Barearse, 70 years to the day since the Grenadiers were sent up.

They had been camping in Chestnut Wood to the south-east of the mountain and from there you can see the main features of the lower part of the mountain clearly. Unfortunately, we picked a day to visit Chestnut Wood when the clouds just would not move away from the peak and I could not get a full picture of the mountain from that most important direction.



This is the best shot I could get from Chestnut Wood of the mountain to be attacked.

Either side of the central Vee are two craggy ridges looking down into a steep ravine. The ridge on the right was named Razorback Ridge but became known as Spandau Ridge because the Germans had well placed machine gun positions along it.

The one on the left was known as Bareback Ridge. This has sheer bare rock cliffs descending precipitously into the ravine one side. On the left of this ridge is the steep rocky western flank of the mountain which was christened Barearse by the guardsmen and it has been known as such ever since.

Perhaps this name succinctly reflects a soldier's bitter and vulnerable perception of its cold unwelcoming sight in wintry weather and the fact that there is nowhere to take adequate cover. The ground is far too rocky to dig in.

Down the centre of the Vee is a mule track descending to the village of Mieli. This was the obvious way to the top but the enemy had anticipated that and any assault by this route would most certainly have been caught in cross-fire from above.

The pyramidal peak is in line with the right hand ridge but is blocked out by the cloud.

Just off the picture to the left is the small hamlet of Calabritto which tapers off to the end of an olive grove in the foothills. It was decided that the 3rd. Coldstream Guards would clear this area of any opposition and the 6th. Grenadiers would pass through them to make their assault of Barearse to Pt. 727 overnight 6-7 November. Pt. 727 is just covered by the left side of the cloud base here.

Before they could begin the Grenadiers had a 6 mile march, carrying their equipment, along the winding roads to Calabritto.



Here we have George Booker walking down the road from Chestnut Wood where he set off with his mates 70 years before.

On approaching Calabritto the Grenadiers had to stop as they could hear the Coldstream having a hard time in the foothills. There were the familiar dull thuds of mines exploding and the exchange of machine gun fire. A captured German was persuaded to guide them through the minefield at the point of a bayonet.

Eventually, at 8:30 pm. the Grenadiers passed through the Coldstream onto a wet rocky mountain side in the dark and in atrocious weather, some carrying 40 lbs. on their backs as well as their weapons. They were spread out in 4 Companies, each with different objectives but Nos. 2&3 Companies had drawn the short straws. They had been ordered to leave their greatcoats at the bottom and take two separate and difficult to see features hidden in the clouds in my photo. These two Companies were to take the brunt of the fighting and few would return.

In those conditions it took them 9 hours and they reached the top of Barearse at 5:30 am. on 7th. November. Then the slaughter started, the Germans had had several weeks to prepare their defences and they knew the terrain.

To summarise: the reports seem to reflect and suggest confusion and a lack of organised leadership at the top, probably due to the loss of senior officers and poor intelligence. Several junior officers took an initiative to organise Nos. 2 & 3 Coys. but their platoons were depleted by a well prepared enemy with established knowledge of the ground. All this in spite of a valiant supportive attack by F Company, Scots Guards on 9th – 10th. November, which

should not be overlooked. The plateau at the top with a wood to the left (now known as Grenadier Wood) and a knoll, Pt. 819 to the right became a killing ground. There were 8 German counter attacks on the two forward Companies which were almost wiped out after 5 days with no warm clothing, little food and dwindling supplies of ammo.

A complete bloody mess. Dad was listed as missing on the 8 November. He'd been hit in the head by shrapnel (which is still littered all over) and taken prisoner. Virtually no one from No.3 Company returned.

Ron was one of the lucky ones. Apart from surviving 5 awful days, he was one of the few to be relieved by the Ox & Bucks Light Infantry who made a corridor for the Guards' withdrawal. He made his way down the mountain, most likely via the mule track, believing that he'd seen his brother dead at the top as he passed through his lines. He would have rested in the old house or caves at Mieli. This marked the end of the First Battle of Camino.

The really sad thing is that just before the withdrawal and after all the death and hardship the Germans taunted the Guards, shouting "come on Tommy, let's see what you can do". The wild response from the Grenadiers, expending the last of their ammo and resorting to the bayonet saw the Germans off. Sadly it wasn't fully realised that the Germans had retreated until the Guards' withdrawal had taken place. They had actually taken the ground but two days later the Germans were back.

A month later, in the second battle, the Generals sent two British Divisions and an American Division to do what had been expected of a battalion and Ron had to face it all again. That's at least 60 times the number of men, preceded by a massive artillery barrage of 71,000 shells, amounting to 1,329 tons from 436 guns.



Parked up in Calabritto, ready for the climb.

So on 6 Nov. 2013. in beautiful sunshine 5 of us set off to climb Barearse. Struggling to push through the heavy vegetation at the edge of the olive grove and the 300 metres beyond were the worst. From there it was a matter of plotting your way from rock to rock and trying not to fall between them. Conveniently, there's a coarse grass growing between the rocks as

frequently you need to grab something quickly as you **lose your balance**; such an easy thing to do in daylight carrying next to nothing. It must have **been hell** for the Guards.



In the olive grove at Calabritto with Barearse rising behind us.

About half way up the rocks seem to get slightly smaller, making the going a little easier but just as you think you are near the top another false crest becomes visible and on it goes.



Approaching the top of Barearse, Point 727 to the left.

This is the ground that would be occupied by No.1 Company, held in reserve, as No.s 2&3 Companies were to press further on.

We managed to reach Point 727 in two and a quarter hours, which just goes to show how difficult it must have been for the Guards, in the dark, laden with kit, unable to see the safe footholds, wet through and always in fear of mines, being shot at or mortared.

When we arrived at Pt. 727 the others were waiting to greet us. They had come up the back of the mountain via the small hamlet of Formella and the cairn. This was the easy way that the Germans had scaled the mountain and supplied their troops.

George had been asked to go to a local school to be interviewed by the children. He had a good time and was somewhat amused by their questions. One youngster asked him what he did when he needed the toilet.

So the rest of us sat in the sunshine, tucked into our sandwiches and viewed the surrounding terrain. We were actually sitting between two gun pits which must have been blown out of the rock by the Germans when they prepared their defences. They were still intact and usable. We reckoned that one of them may well have been used by the enemy who opened fire on No.3 Company as they approached this point at daybreak on 7 November 1943. This was when Lt. Henshaw was mortally wounded. Shortly after this they would have been overrun as the Guards made their attack into the wood.



Time to eat at Point 727.

This was also a good place to view the actual battleground from for the first time. The terrain is far more level here, converged on by the two ridges and couldn't be seen from below. It became known as the Saucer.



Adam in one of the gun pits at Pt. 727.



The gun pit from where Lt. Henshaw and 3 Coy. were most probably fired on.



The gun pit above overlooks this ground to the north-west and No. 3 Company would have climbed this ground. It is most likely in this area where Lt. Henshaw was shot. In the near distance, beyond, is the Aquapendola Spur with Point 550 at the far end.



This is a view immediately to the right of the last shot, looking at the forward edge of Grenadier Wood. It is now much thicker with trees than it was even 15 years ago. The rock terraces that run through it can be seen at the edge and the hump of Point 819, the objective of No.2 Company, in the centre.

In the distance is the pyramid shaped peak of the mountain, quite another climb in itself but there is a zig-zag track. This was known as Monastery Hill and was not an objective in the

first battle. However, it gave the enemy an extremely good view of movement over the battlefield and was a tough objective taken by the Queen's Regiment in the second battle a month later. There is a relatively new chapel near the top now.



This view moves a little further to the right again, facing to the north-east. The now tree covered and more fertile central plateau can be seen dropping away in the direction of the mule track which descends between the two ridges to the village of Mieli at the bottom. This area was to be held by No.4 Company.

Razorback Ridge, or Spandau Ridge as it became known, can be seen on the other side of the central ravine, rising through the three humped features which became known as "Pip", "Squeak" and "Wilfred" to the peak of the mountain.



Off into Grenadier Wood, Adam and I with Mike Sterling.



Mike had thoughtfully brought two of these crosses along for us.

Obviously the brothers didn't die up here but somehow it seemed the right thing to do after all the terror they must have experienced. They never forgot the place and this was the reason we were here



That says it all for me. Adam thinks the world of his Granddad.

The following day we went to the chapel at the very top of Monte Camino. This was much higher up than we had been so far but easier to get to by road most of the way from the northern side of the mountain.

We travelled by car to a very small hamlet called Colle high in the mountain, from where most of us walked to the top but the local Carabinieri kindly provided a 4 wheel drive jeep to take the ladies and the less energetic amongst us.

The walk took about half an hour on a zig-zagging path to the chapel and from there one could see the commanding view the Germans had had of the fighting area. There would have been almost nothing that couldn't be seen by them from this vantage point.



Looking down and south from the chapel onto the plateau where the battle had taken place.

The mule track can be seen going through the centre, across land which is grazed by goats and wild horses. It then continues down the ravine between the Barearse Ridge and Spandau Ridge in the distance to the village of Mieli.

In the centre distance is the top of Barearse which we had climbed the previous day from the opposite direction. The height of its sheer vertical cliffs descending into the central ravine can be seen quite clearly. To the right of the grassland is Grenadier Wood which has a far greater intensity of trees now than there would have been during the war.

The wood rises to the right to No.2 Company's objective, Pt. 819.

With hindsight one can readily see that this area was a textbook killing ground: difficult to see from below; hard to climb to and get supplies to; very little cover at the time and dominated by a well prepared enemy with a superb view of the fighting area. That's without considering the weather conditions. This was the "Saucer".



The chapel at the top of the mountain and the bell being wound up to let everyone in the valleys below know that there was somebody up there.



Inside the Chapel.



Dad's photo on the altar of the chapel alongside one of Mike Sterling's uncle.

It took 70 years but we got him there.



Our group with the two Caribinieri in the centre.



Looking down from the Chapel to the Monastery at Monte Cassino approx. 15 miles away to the north-north-west.

The monastery can be seen about 1/4 the way down the picture on top of Monte Cassino which is dwarfed by Monte Cairo beyond.



Looking in the opposite direction from the Monastery at Monte Cassino to Monte Camino. The pyramid peak of Monte Camino can be seen to the left of centre.

On 11 November 1943 the remainder of the battalion was **withdrawn** from the mountain to take shelter in caves and an old house at Mieli at the **bottom of the mule track**, back in the direction from where they had come. They were completely **exhausted** after their ordeal.



The old house at the bottom of the Mule Track.



The house is a complete ruin but remarkably it still stands 70 years on.

In that first Battle of Camino 6-11 November 1943, four hundred and eighty three Grenadiers went up Monte Camino in four Companies. Only two hundred and sixty three returned with many of them wounded, therefore two hundred and twenty were killed or taken POW. They had lost 50% of their fighting strength.

$483 \div 4 =$ approximately 120 men per Company. It's believed that almost nobody returned from No. 3 Company and little more than twenty returned from No.2 Company.

These figures still need to be studied but can be considered to be quite close. Ron's recollections would be so valuable here. I think he actually told me once but I can't recall.

Those who returned were sent to rest camps in the Sorrento Peninsular and reinforcements were drafted to replace the losses in men.

The Second Battle of Camino.

In mid November all the officers of the 201st. Guards Brigade were called to a meeting to be addressed by the Divisional Commander, General Templar, who had clearly been made to realise the cost of underestimating the demands made on just one battalion in the first battle. Monte Camino came entirely in the British sector and so in the next assault on the mountain their entire Division, the 56th. London Division, would be supported by the 46th. Division on their left, to the west, and by an American Division moving in from the east from Monte la Difensa. The whole attack would be supported by the Corps' Artillery.

The assault would be made in two phases:

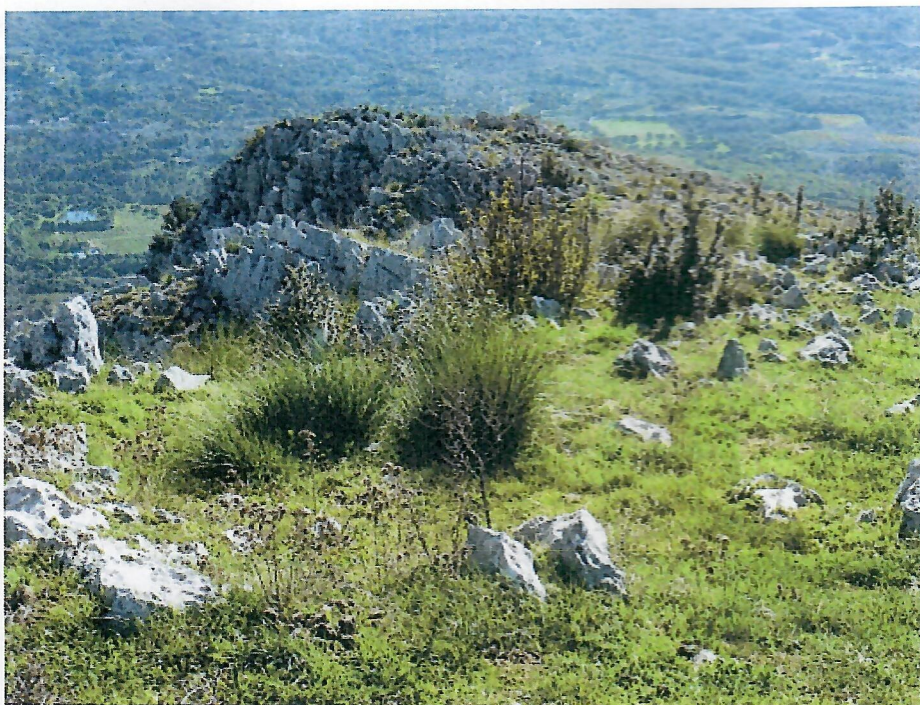
In phase one, after a massive artillery and aerial bombardment of known German positions, (mentioned earlier) the two ridges of Monte Camino would be attacked simultaneously. The Queen's Brigade of the 56th. Div. would attack the right hand eastern ridge of the mountain and take Pt.819 and Monastery Hill.

The 201st. Guards Brigade would concentrate their attack on the western side of the mountain and this time the 3rd. Coldstream Guards would scale Barearse, passing through Pt. 727 and take Points 683 and 615.

The depleted 6th. Grenadiers were to be held in reserve for phase two and pass through the Coldstream when they had taken these objectives. The Grenadiers were to clear the enemy from the north-western side of the mountain over the Aquapendola Spur and down into Rocca d'Evandro. This would be Ron's next action.

So on 4th.December the Second Battle of Camino began. The Grenadiers advanced up the mule track towards Pt.727 and for two cold and rainy days they sheltered from the weather and mortar fire below the cliffs near the top of Barearse whilst the Coldstream pressed on their attack. At one point the Coldstream had become short of ammunition and a party of Grenadiers had to take a supply through under the cover of darkness to their position near to where the Cairn now stands and where the Coldstream advance had halted. After two attacks the Coldstream achieved their objectives and similarly, after three attempts, the Queen's Brigade took the top of the mountain to their great credit. The peak of the mountain is a natural fortress and would have taken great determination to take from the enemy.

So at 10:00 hrs.on 6th.December the Grenadiers were told make their attack and after passing through a gap in the cliffs near Pt.727 they advanced across the north-western stretch of Barearse, through and below the Coldstream positions to make their attack on the Aquapendola Ridge to the west of the mountain.



Looking south from Pt.727 at the cliffs of Barearse descending into the ravine. This is the area where the Grenadiers waited for two days before making their attack in Phase 2.

This is also most likely the gap in the cliffs that they passed through.



The Grenadiers would have passed below Grenadier Wood and then by the Coldstream at this point near the Cairn and advanced on to the Aquapendola Spur above. Pt. 550 can be seen at the right hand end of this feature.

The mountain itself had been taken and now it was the Grenadiers' task to clear the remaining enemy from the smaller hills down towards the River Garigliano.

The high point of the Aquapendola Spur, Pt. 550 was taken by No. 3 Company and further on towards Rocca d'Evandro No.4 Company were to take Pt.470. This would take another two days due to fierce resistance from German machine gunners but this was eventually overcome due to advances made by Scots Guards on their left and US troops on the right.



Looking down on the castle at Rocca d'Evandro in the general direction which the Grenadiers would have had to clear. The Spur and Pt.550 are just off the left of the picture and the town of Rocca d'Evandro can be seen further on as the land falls away into the Garigliano valley.

On 9th.December two patrols of Grenadiers entered Rocca d'Evandro simultaneously and found it to be deserted. The area was now liberated from German occupation and the Grenadiers moved into the castle to take cover from any enemy shell fire.

This marked an end to the first part of the Germans' "Winter Line". There were several predetermined lines of defence across Italy by which the Germans and Italians had planned a resistance to allied troop movements northwards towards Rome. Their next such line of resistance would be the Gustav Line and this developed into a series of drawn out battles at Cassino in 1944.

Shortly after liberating Rocca d'Evandro the 6th.Grenadiers along with rest of their Brigade were moved to a place near the mouth of the River Garigliano overlooking the Gulf of Gaeta. They were placed on the south side of the river on the extreme left of the allied front where there were still German patrols harassing allied communications.

Initially there was no allied bridgehead to enable the crossing of the river at this point but after being allowed a three week break out of the line a small one had been established and they crossed the river.

Along with the Coldstream they were to engage the enemy again in the foothills of the Aurunci Mountains and pushed them back from a position where they were able to harass the bridgehead. During this battle, the last one of the 6th. Battalion, they lost a very considerable number of officers and men and in early February 1944, after a brief rest, they returned to a position near the bridgehead to relieve the Scots Guards.

The Grenadiers themselves were eventually relieved by an American battalion and were sent back to rest in good billets at Piano di Sorrento. They arrived there at the same time as the 5th.Battalion, who were being returned from Anzio.

It had now become apparent that the Grenadiers could not support 6 battalions in the field as more men were being required to form an army for the main invasion of North-west Europe later in the year. Therefore, it was decided to dissolve the 6th.Battalion and return the veterans to England whilst 17 officers and nearly 400 other ranks were transferred to the 5th.Battalion and remain in Italy.

Ron's record shows that he was one of those posted to the 5th.Battalion at this time on 13th.March 1944 just a week before his 20th. birthday. He'd been with the 6th.Battalion for 177 days and endured and survived some of the hardest fighting the regiment had seen and was most likely still believing that he'd left his brother on the top of Monte Camino. He would go on to fight with the 5th. Battalion at Cassino and places further north in Italy alongside the 3rd.Battalion.

The 5th.Battalion was disbanded in February 1945 and on 1st.March 1945 Ron was posted to a reformed 3rd.Battalion.

He was flown home on the 2nd.August 1945 and on 18th.September he was sent to a Holding Battalion.

On 5th.November 1945 he was posted to the 2nd.Battalion and shipped out to NW Europe to serve with BAOR for what appears to be a one year posting. He completed his service with the colours on the 18th. September 1946.

On 31st.October 1946 he was posted to the 4th.Battalion and arrived back in the UK on the 8th. November. He was then attached to the Salisbury Plain Ranges Detachment and billeted at Greenlands Farm Salisbury Wiltshire.

On 8th.March 1947 he was sent to the 1st. Battalion and on 19th.April he was released to the Reserve.

He was discharged on 26th.July 1947 although it seems that he was kept on the Reserve List until 18th.September 1954. That would be 12 years after his enlistment date. His record therefore confirms that he served with all six battalions of the Grenadier Guards.

Meanwhile from being listed as missing on Monte Camino on 8th.November 1943 Dad had been taken POW and taken north into Austria.

Details acquired from the Guards' Museum show that the Germans had given him a POW number 156404 and that he was held at Stalag 17A. He had received a grenade wound to the head.

Stalag 17A is listed as being at Kaisersteinbruch, Austria. This is south-east of Vienna and where Dad had said he was. It can be found on a satellite map.

He was repatriated from there by an arrangement organised by the Swedish Red Cross on 3rd.September 1944 and arrived in the UK on 16th.September after being transported by train through Austria to Stettin on the Baltic coast of Poland. He was then brought home by sea, most likely on the MV Gripsholm.

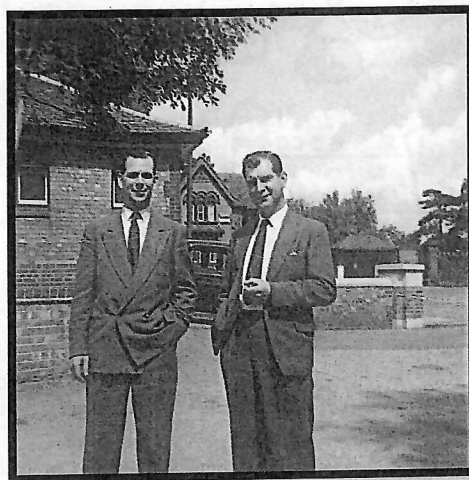
He was discharged from the army on 15th.December 1944.



L/Sgt. Charles Henry Henshaw.
2616692



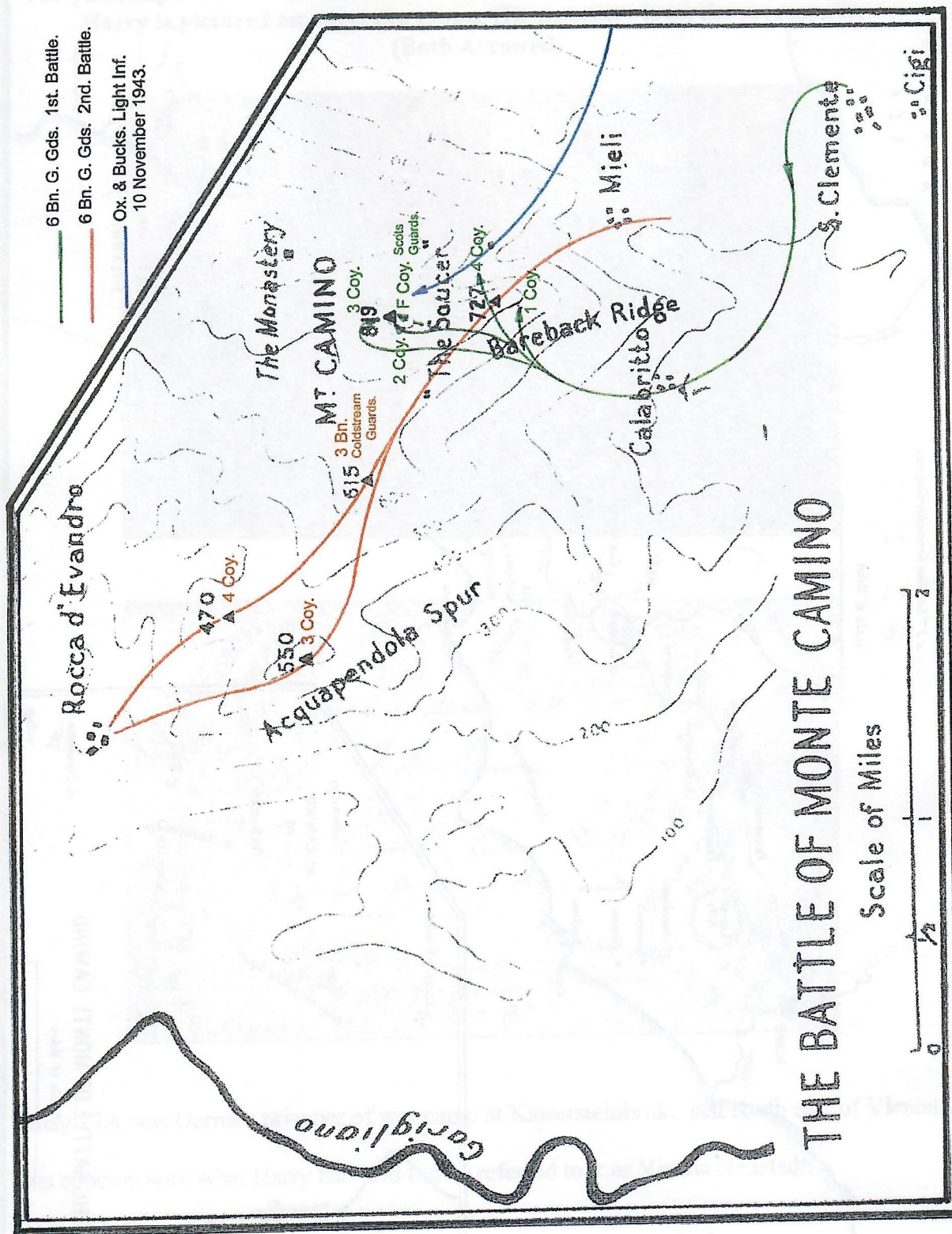
Gdsn. Ronald Henshaw.
2623452

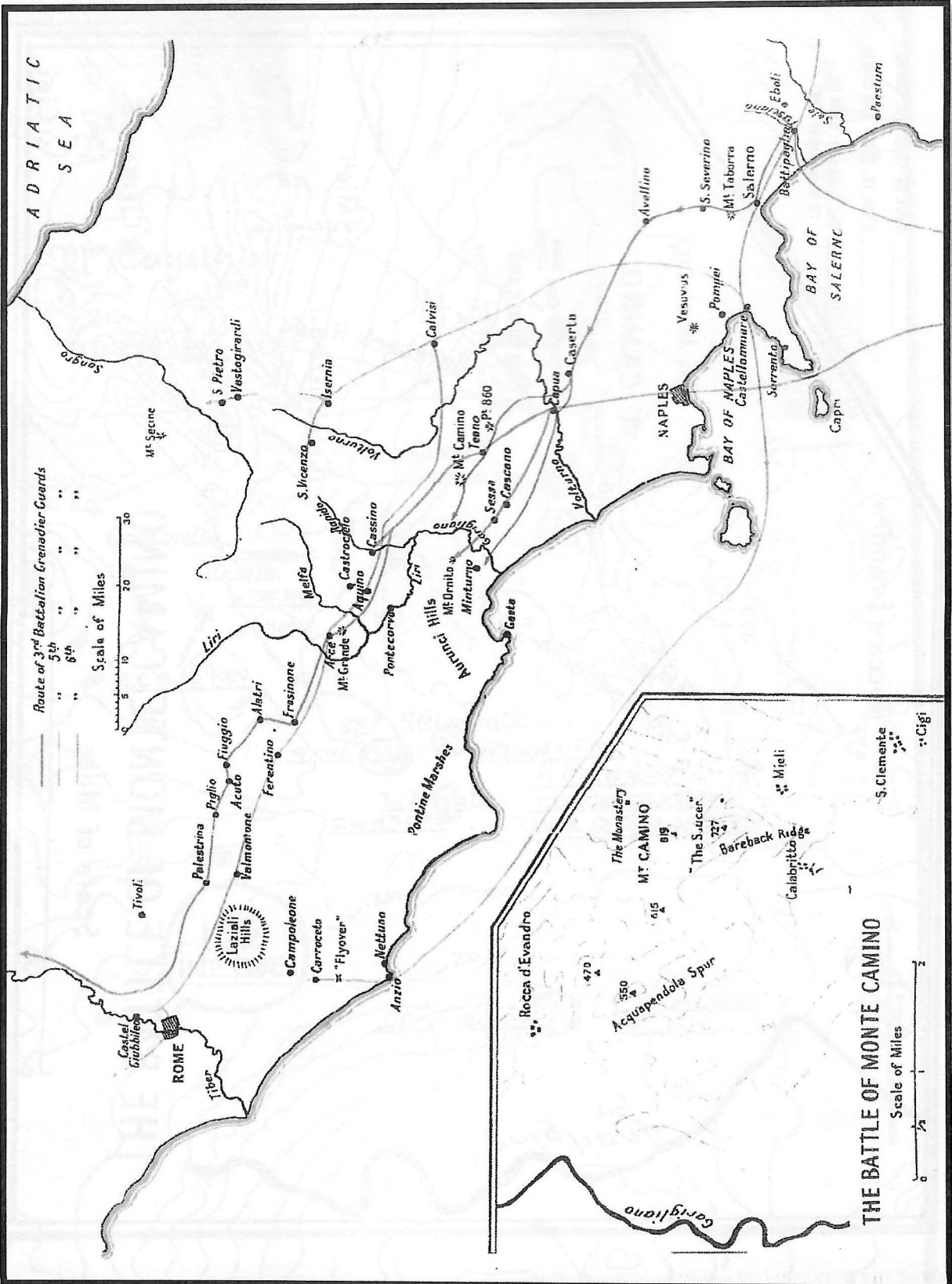


Happier times in The Porchester car park sometime in the 1950's.

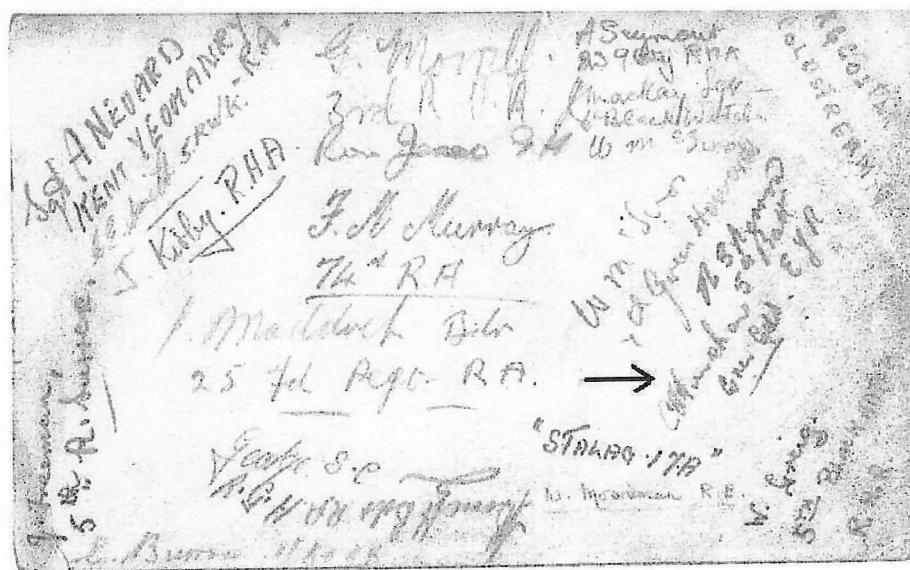
*John Henshaw
December 2013.*







The photographs below were found on a website for Stalag17A and quite surprisingly Harry is pictured amongst the group. His signature is on the reverse side. (Both Arrowed).



Stalag 17A was German prisoner of war camp at Kaisersteinbrunn, just south east of Vienna.

This concurs with what Harry had said but he referred to it as Vienna Neustadt.

